

TREATMENT OF SCOTTISH HISTORY

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King could not play off one House of Parliament against another, since the Scottish Parliament consisted of a single chamber, in which nobles, barons of the shires, and burghesses all sat together. Under Charles II and James II the government of the country had been conducted by the Privy Council ;¹ after the emancipation of Parliament from the control of the Lords of the Articles, the importance of the Council diminished.

It was the Council which conducted the repressive measures, against the ecclesiastical or political opponents of the government, which fill so large a place in Scottish history during the reigns of Charles II and James II. Macaulay mentions the beginnings of this repression in chapter ii, when he describes the administrations of Lauderdale and of the Duke of York. Incidentally he charges James with exceptional cruelty.

The Scottish Privy Council had power to put state prisoners to the question. But the sight was so dreadful that, as soon as the boots appeared, even the most servile and hard-hearted courtiers hastened out of the chamber. The Duke of York, it was remarked, seemed to take pleasure in the spectacle . . . He not only came to Council when the torture was to be inflicted, but watched the agonies of the sufferers with that sort of interest and complacency with which men observe a curious experiment in science.²

¹ The Calendars of the Register of the Privy Council of Scotland now cover the period from 1473 to 1689 (1933). Its action during the reign of Charles II is fully explained in Professor Hume Brown's introductions to the post-Restoration volumes, and by those of Robert Kerr Hannay.

²1, 260 (ii). See Mr. T. F. Henderson's note at p. 71 of his edition of the History. In one of his letters James expresses his satisfaction that a prisoner, after torture by the boot, has begun to speak. When the **Privy** Council proposed that contumacious rebels, who were let off with transportation, should be * stigmatised by having one of the ears of everyone of them cut off ', he warmly approved of the measure. Hist. MSS. Comm., MSS. of the Duke of Buccleuch at Drumlanrig, i (1897), 105, 205.